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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000289

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ECON](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: NINEWA: KURDS AND ARABS TAKING STEPS TOWARD  
POLITICAL RECONCILIATION

REF: A. BAGHDAD 244  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 200

Classified By: NINEWA PRT LEADER JASON HYLAND: 1.4 (B) AND (D)

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

[1](#)1. (C/REL ACGU) Summary: Provincial Vice Governor and President of the Ninewa Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Khasro Goran told PRT Leader January 21 that the Kurdish parties had made strides with the Arab Sunni parties in Ninewa Province in working together toward political reconciliation. Goran opined that the De-Ba'athification law would have little effect in Ninewa unless there were economic reforms and growth in the province. Senior members of both the KDP and the Sunni Arab-dominated Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) have been involved in interparty talks that have taken place in Erbil over the past several months. In the wake of the January 23 massive explosion in Mosul (reftels), the provincial leadership is clearly all the more focused on the imperative to avoid a further ethnic rift in this strategic region of Iraq, and to move toward long-term reconciliation. End Summary.

Kurds and Arab Sunnis Coming Together Politically  
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[1](#)2. (C/REL ACGU) Ninewa Vice Governor and Ninewa branch KDP President Khasro Goran told PRT Leader January 21 that the Kurdish Parties and the Arab Sunni Parties had been moving toward political reconciliation in the province. The Kurdish parties were easier to work with, since they were united together with one voice. The Sunni parties were more difficult to identify, since no one party represented all Sunnis, nor had a strong following in any one place. Goran said he had trouble identifying who the Sunni leadership was, since anyone could claim to be a Sheikh and anyone could claim to represent a large population of Sunnis. He said he had been attempting to meet with anyone and everyone over the past few weeks in an effort to identify and work with them to find a political common ground.

KDP-IIP Talks Bearing Fruit  
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[1](#)3. (C) Goran spoke highly of the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) Chairman Dr. Mohammed Shakir, and stated that the KDP and the IIP had recently signed an agreement on points of common ground in the province (Note: this is part of a larger agreement between the IIP and the Kurdish parties to cooperate at the national level. End note). Goran asserted that the KDP and IIP would continue to work together to bring the Arab Sunni voice back to the provincial leadership. In a separate meeting, Shakir told PRTOff the same, stressing the

need for political reconciliation. During a January 20 Provincial Council (PC) meeting, IIP PC member Hasan said that for the first time since 2004, he believes the Kurds are willing to work with the Sunni Arabs.

#### DeBa'athification Needs to Come with Economic Growth

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¶4. (C) Responding to PRT Leader's question on the new De-Ba'athification legislation, Goran stated that, in order to make a difference, De-Ba'athification needed to come hand in hand with economic development. Former generals and other high level leaders in the former Ba'athist regime would engage in business and entrepreneurial ventures, and would not need to be in their old positions in the army or government, if the economic and security situation improved. Further, Goran stated that many of the people in the current provincial government were former Ba'athists, but that was not a problem (Note: Ninewa did not undergo a large scale purge of mid and lower-level civil servants who were Ba'ath members. End note). He said that in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) former officials with links to the Saddam regime have become successful businessmen and left their pasts behind because of the economic opportunities.

Comment

¶5. (C) The movement of the KDP and the IIP toward real political reconciliation is promising in a province where the majority of the population (60-70 percent Arab Sunni) has little or no voice in provincial politics due to a partial boycott of the previous elections. If free and fair provincial elections were held tomorrow, the IIP would

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probably have a major voice in selecting Ninewa's new governor but it would still need the KDP's support in a new PC to govern effectively. Goran is right that Arab Sunnis in the province do not have one or two leaders who speak for the majority of their community, which is one of the main obstacles to structuring effective negotiations on political reconciliation between the Kurds and the Arab Sunnis. In the wake of the January 23 massive explosion in Mosul (reftels), the provincial leadership wants to avoid a further ethnic rift, and move toward reconciliation. PRT will continue to monitor and promote cooperation and communication among all the political parties in the province to promote effective political reconciliation across the broad spectrum of parties.

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